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ABSTRACT

**The Effects of Level of Training on Employee Perceived Empowerment,
Commitment and Job Performance**

by

Pamela Dawn Backeberg

Dr. David L. Corsun, Examination Committee Chair
Assistant Professor of Hotel Administration
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Billions of dollars are spent yearly on employee training. Yet employers often find it difficult to measure whether the training has any real effect. Due to the vast resources allocated to training, it is important to fully understand its impact. The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of level of training on employees' perceived psychological empowerment, commitment, and resultant job performance within the hospitality industry. Data were collected from 158 Air Force employees working on one of two military bases in the areas of food service, lodging, recreation, fitness, linen exchange, and mortuary affairs. Specifically, this research focused on training received by Air Force service personnel. As employees attained higher levels of training, they perceived themselves as more influential and were rated by supervisors as better performers. Implications for future research are discussed.

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AND JOB PERFORMANCE

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS PURPOSE

Introduction

"U.S. employers spent an average of $627 on training per employee in 1998, the highest per-employee outlay globally, according to the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) second annual International Comparisons Report for 2000" ("ASTD Survey," 2000). Yet employers often find it difficult to measure whether or not the training provided has any real effect (Rollins & Bratkovich, 1988). The costs associated with employee training programs and efforts vary depending on the level of training needed by individual employees (Richardson, 1998). For example, initial employee training may be more costly than annual or refresher training for existing employees. Training can also be very time consuming. Since companies invest considerable resources in employee training programs (e.g. time, money), they need to know whether or not their training dollars are buying results (Davis & Davis, 1999).

The Importance of Training

Training can benefit employees in a number of ways. Effective training programs help staff become more efficient and effective in daily operations (Richardson, 1998). A well-trained staff will have higher morale and productivity, giving the employer the

opportunity to provide incentives to employees (1998). Training can also help to clarify an individual's position and responsibilities within an organization in terms of the duties an employee is responsible to perform and the relevance of the job position within the organization (Gale, 1990). Napier (1992) stated, "People will work best and be more cooperative when they understand what is expected of them and why their participation is necessary" (p. 75). Additionally, employees are more apt to take training more seriously if they know they will be held accountable for their learning (Davis & Davis, 1999).

Investing in employees brings rewards for a company despite often heavy financial investment (Gale, 1990). The quality and quantity of service provided to customers is enhanced when carefully developed and maintained training programs are in place. Employees who are adequately trained can deliver high quality service, which will improve the image of the firm and attract more customers and employees to the organization (Kotler, Bowen & Makens, 1999). Loyal customers and positive word of mouth are created when employees deliver quality service to the customer as promised. Creating loyal customers is extremely important to companies. According to Kotler et al. (1999), "Studies have shown that it costs four to six times as much to create a customer as it does to maintain an existing one" (p. 364). Evaluating both the benefits and effectiveness of employee training programs is crucial in order to completely understand the value training brings to the company (Miller, 1999).

Randolph (1995) stated, "The need to change the way organizations and the people in them conduct business has never been greater" (p. 19). With rapidly changing technologies, shifting work force and customer demographics, increased emphasis on quality and flexibility in products and services, and escalating development of global

markets, companies need to produce at a lower cost, with better quality, and at a faster pace than their competitors. This requires a shift from traditional bureaucratic managerial hierarchies to flatter organizations and employee empowerment philosophies (Randolph, 1995). Overall, as the trend continues to move toward increased employee empowerment and decreased managerial levels, companies must learn and understand the nature and mechanics of empowerment to effectively empower employees.

Empowerment

Empowerment is "a motivational process of an individual's experience of feeling enabled" (Corsun & Enz, 1999, p. 207). Many researchers and practitioners focus on empowering-type management practices, including the "delegation of decision making from higher organizational levels to lower ones and increasing access to information and resources for individuals at the lower levels" (Spreitzer, 1995, p. 1443). According to Conger and Kanungo (1988), managerial practices alone may empower employees, but are not guaranteed to do so. As a result, other researchers address empowerment as a psychological construct, focusing on employees' personal beliefs and feelings (Spreitzer, 1995). This study focuses on the psychological aspect of empowerment in an attempt to better understand how training affects employees' perceived psychological empowerment, commitment, and performance within the hospitality industry.

Commitment

Employee training and/or empowerment philosophies may also affect an individual's commitment to, and/or subsequent performance in, an organization. The concept of employee commitment has received increasing attention in the literature as

organizations seek ways to increase employee retention. "Today's workers expect support for personal development and long term growth" (Clark, 1998, p. 123). Employees expect more from the companies they work for than ever before (1998).

Numerous studies explore the antecedents and consequences of commitment (Roberts, Coulson & Chonko, 1999; Wiener, 1982; Williams & Hazer, 1986). Commitment has been found to be positively related to "motivation and involvement, expressions of positive affect and loyalty, some aspects of job performance, and prosocial behaviour" (Caldwell, Chatman, & O'Reilly, 1990, p. 245). Additionally, it has been found to be negatively associated with absenteeism and turnover (1990). Accordingly, it is important for organizations to understand what they can do to enhance commitment. Providing adequate employee training and/or empowerment philosophies may be one avenue for organizations to do so.

Performance

Perceived empowerment may also have an effect on employee performance. Worley (1988) stated, "Gaining a competitive advantage increasingly depends on improving productivity at all levels—on investing in our human resources" (p. 39). In order to empower employees, an adequate amount of time, resources and effort must be spent to develop and implement comprehensive training programs (Bowen & Lawler, 1992). The Ritz-Carlton's success is based on a simple philosophy: "To take care of customers, you must first take care of those who take care of customers" (Kotler et al., 1999). Job design research shows that when employees have a sense of control and find meaning in their work, they are more satisfied (Bowen & Lawler, 1992). As a result of

feeling better about their jobs and themselves, employees are more apt to perform their job duties with more enthusiasm and take better care of customers (1992).

Problem Statement

Results of previous research in the areas of training, psychological empowerment, commitment, and performance provide strong evidence and principles to build upon. However, the relationship that training level plays in predicting employees' perceived psychological empowerment, commitment, and their resultant job performance within the hospitality industry is under-explored. This research examines the degree to which the level of training affects employee perceptions of psychological empowerment, commitment, and performance.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the effects of level of training on employees' perceived psychological empowerment, commitment, and resultant job performance within the hospitality industry. This research focuses on the effects of the level of training received by Air Force service personnel. The personnel surveyed work within a service context in the areas of food service, lodging, recreation, fitness, linen exchange, and mortuary affairs on either of two bases in the Southwest United States.

Training level is determined by analyzing the training courses each military member has completed. All courses are categorized into one of three levels. Level 1 training courses are generally introductory-type courses geared toward members who have served less than four years in the military. Level 2 courses are mid-level

leadership/managerial courses for members having five to eight years in the service. Level 3 courses are designed for senior leaders/managers who have been in the military for nine years or more.

Hypotheses

H1:   The more advanced one's level of training, the greater his/her perceptions of psychological empowerment.

H2:   The more advanced one's level of training, the greater his/her commitment to the organization.

H3:   The more advanced one's level of training, the greater his/her job performance within the organization.

H4:   Employee perceptions of psychological empowerment will have significant positive effects on his/her work performance.

H5:   Employee perceptions of psychological empowerment will have significant positive effects on his/her commitment to the organization.

H6:   Age, gender, education level, Time in Grade (TIG), and Time in Service (TIS) will have no effect on any of the outcome variables.

These relationships are represented graphically in Figure 1.

Significance of the Study

The work environment can have a positive or negative effect on employees' attitudes and behaviors (Corsun & Enz, 1999). Training is an integral part of any work
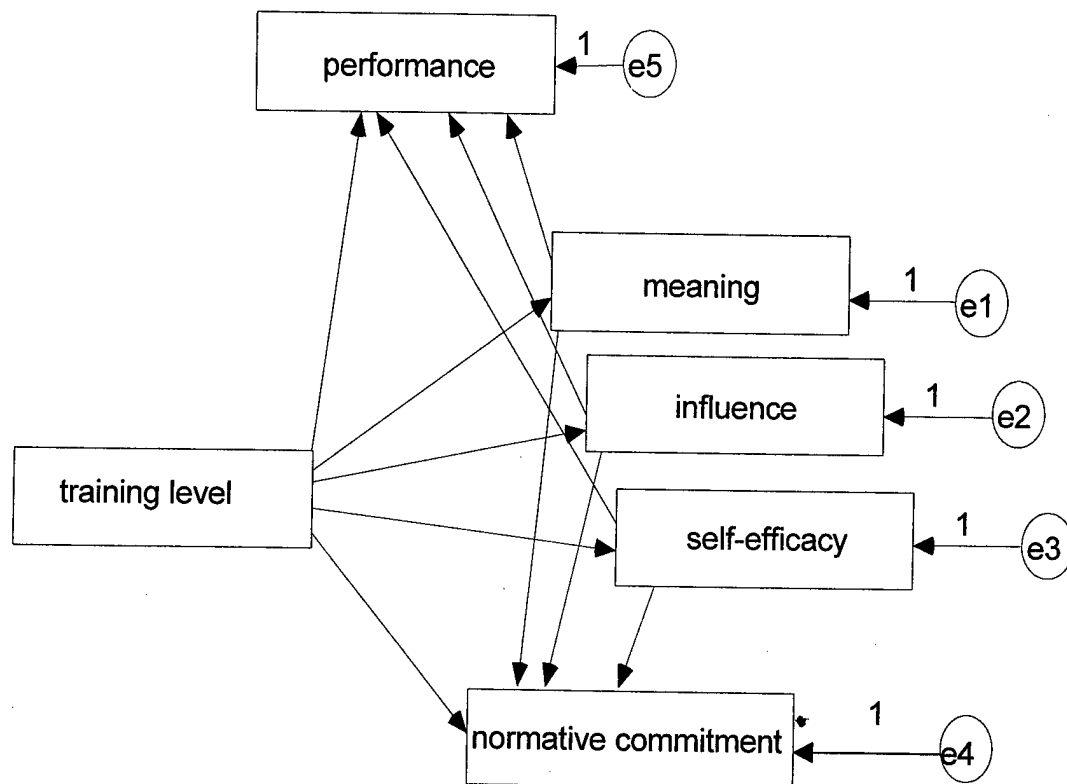
Figure 1: Hypothesized Path Model

environment and can strongly influence the success of service-based businesses. Due to the extensive costs associated with employee training, managers should fully understand how it could affect employees. This study may be of significant value to managers desiring to better control and understand the value of training within their organizations.

Definitions

Air Force / military members – active duty personnel employed by the United States Air Force working within a Services squadron; includes enlisted and officer ranks

Empowerment - "a motivational process of an individual's experience of feeling enabled" (Corsun & Enz, 1999, p. 207)

Influence - an individual's belief that he/she can affect or influence outcomes and decisions in the workplace (Fulford & Enz, 1995)

Meaning - the value of a work goal or purpose, as judged in relation to an individual's personal ideals or standards (Spreitzer, 1995)

Organizational commitment - "an individual's psychological attachment to an organization—the psychological bond linking the individual and the organization" (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986, p. 492)

Psychological empowerment - a motivational construct manifested in three cognitions: influence, self-efficacy and meaning (Corsun & Enz, 1999)

Self-efficacy - "one's belief in one's capability to perform a specific task" (Gist, 1987, p. 472)

Services / Services squadron - Air Force personnel working in the areas of food service, lodging, mortuary and fitness/recreation

<u>Time in Grade (TIG)</u> - The number of years a military member has served in a current grade/rank

<u>Time in Service (TIS)</u> - The number of years of total service a member has served in the military

<u>Training</u> - "the systematic process of attempting to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes for current or future jobs" (Blanchard & Thacker, 1999, p. 7)

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Numerous researchers and practitioners believe that training is critical in order for businesses to remain competitive and maintain a leading edge (Baumann, 1999; Franklin, 1999; Hernan, 1999, Miller, 1999; Ottman, 1993). Training is used within organizations to improve current job skills, prepare for career enhancement, teach new or changing job requirements, and as an entry/socialization process (Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 1991). Employee training is extremely important for organizational success (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). "Training is crucial for any business if it is to keep the skills of its employees and management honed" (Hutchcraft, 1999, p. 93). Accordingly, businesses should explore the effectiveness of various training methods in order to design training programs that yield the highest performance results possible (Gist, 1989). Researchers have called for studies that examine the effectiveness of training (Gist, 1989; Gist, Schwoerer & Rosen, 1989; Martocchio, 1994). To date, little evidence is available on the effectiveness of level of training in a work context. This research examines the effects of level of training on military members' experienced empowerment, commitment and subsequent performance.

Military Training

Training is of the utmost importance to the United States Armed Forces. "The ultimate purpose of all military training is the assurance of victory in war.... If we train well, the task of winning the victory will require far less time than that which will be necessary if we train poorly" (Napier, 1992, p. 158). The mission of the United States Air Force is to fly, to fight and to win. Adequate training plays an extremely important role in the Air Force's ability to accomplish its mission ("AFSC 3MOX1 Services," 2000). The Services Squadron supports the Air Force mission by operating the base support areas of food service and lodging activities, recreation, fitness and sports programs, linen exchange operations, mortuary affairs programs, honor guard teams and readiness programs.

The education and training mission of the Services Agency (Headquarters) is "to deliver cost effective education and training programs that increase employee productivity and customer satisfaction." This entails the utilization of a comprehensive education and training document that identifies life-cycle education/training requirements, training support resources, and a minimum core task requirement for the Services specialty, known as a Career Field Education and Training Plan (CFETP) ("AFSC 3MOX1 Services," 2000). The CFETP encapsulates the entire spectrum of education and training programs within the Services career field. Currently this includes initial skills training courses, formal technical training courses, self-study career development courses (CDCs), on-the-job training (OJT), and professional military education (PME). However, no research has been conducted to determine the effects of

the previously listed training on employees' perceived empowerment, commitment and/or performance within the Air Force.

One driver of employee training that has gained increasing attention in the literature is the concept of empowerment (Bowen & Lawler, 1992; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Randolph, 1995; Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997). Much of the literature implies that the key to organizational success in the 21st century is an empowered, proactive, customer-focused workforce (Faiello, 2000; Hartline, Maxham & McKee, 2000; Maurer, 2000; Spreitzer, 1996). In today's fast-paced, technologically sophisticated, global work environment, organizations are beginning to demand more from employees than in the past (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997). At the same time, employees are starting to make an increasing number of demands on their employers, desiring more involvement in decision-making, opportunities for growth and development, and recognition and respect (Faiello, 2000). "It no longer suffices to merely dazzle customers. We must also delight employees if they are to invest their knowledge, skills, and innovation in the organization's continued success" (Pratt, 2000, p. 10). Formal empowerment programs are, in part, driving the need for organizations to provide effective training. However, empowerment is also viewed in the literature in a second way—as a psychological construct. Therefore, it is important to understand not only the managerial techniques and/or practices associated with empowerment programs, but also the psychological dimension of empowerment. In this study, I focus on the impact level of training has on psychological empowerment.

Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment focuses on employee experience and intrinsic task

motivation (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Thomas and Velthouse (1990) proposed a

cognitive model of empowerment that identified four cognitions (task assessments) as the

basis for worker empowerment: impact, competence, meaningfulness and choice. Impact

refers to the "degree to which behavior is seen as 'making a difference' in terms of

accomplishing the purpose of the task" (p. 672). The second cognition, competence,

refers to the ability of a person to perform a specific task in a skillful way.

Meaningfulness describes the amount of value a person places on a specific task or

purpose. Low degrees of meaningfulness are associated with apathy and feeling detached

and unrelated to important events (May, 1969). The fourth cognition, choice, involves

perceiving one's personal decision as a cause (locus of causality) for one's own behavior

and is the main element of self-motivation (deCharms, 1968). Deci and Ryan (1985)

found that when individuals perceive they have greater choice, they demonstrate greater

flexibility, creativity, initiative, resiliency and self-regulation. In contrast, the perception

of being controlled by events results in tension, a more negative emotional tone, and

decreased self-esteem.

Diversified research addresses the various components of empowerment and

relatedly, the effects of different job characteristics on intrinsic motivation (Gagne,

Senecal, & Koestner, 1997; Kraimer, Seibert, & Liden, 1999). Spreitzer (1995) built on

the earlier work of Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and took initial steps to develop and

validate a measure of psychological empowerment in the workplace. Spreitzer (1995)

developed a four dimensional scale in an attempt to measure impact, competence,

meaning (meaningfulness), and self-determination (choice). The four dimensions were argued to "combine additively to create an overall construct of psychological empowerment" (Spreitzer, 1995, p. 1444). Spreitzer's model provided evidence that each of the four dimensions contribute to the overall construct of empowerment in varying degrees.

In a study of 292 service workers from 21 private clubs, Corsun and Enz (1999) found supportive peer and customer relationships are predictive of higher levels of employee experienced empowerment. Organizational and employee-centered relationships explained significant variation in three dimensions of psychological empowerment: meaningfulness, influence, and self-efficacy. In their three-dimensional model of psychological empowerment, 'influence' captures the self-determination and personal control aspects of the Spreitzer (1995) scale. This is because of the nature of service organizations, where the dimensions of self-determination and personal control may overlap (Fulford & Enz, 1995). "A large percentage of organizational outcomes are determined by employee behaviors. The employees' abilities to influence their own behaviors may ultimately influence organizational outcomes" (p.164). 'Self-efficacy' captures the competence measure of the Spreitzer (1995) scale.

The previously listed three dimensions of psychological empowerment are highly interrelated. For example, when employees experience a sense of self-efficacy in a situation, they are more likely to develop an interest in the activity and the activity becomes meaningful (Mathieu, Martineau, & Tannenbaum, 1993). Having access to information about the mission of an organization is also significantly related to the meaningfulness aspect of empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995). Employees need to know how

they and the company are doing, and if their actions make a difference (Randolph, 1995).

Additionally, individuals with higher levels of self-efficacy are more likely to see

themselves as able to influence their work and/or make a difference in the organization

(Spreitzer, 1995). Even though each dimension can be independently and distinctly

measured, changes within one dimension may indirectly affect the other dimensions

(Mathieu et al., 1993).

<div align="center">Training and Psychological Empowerment</div>

<u>Self-efficacy</u>

As previously discussed, there are three dimensions of psychological

empowerment in a service context: self-efficacy, meaningfulness, and influence (Corsun

& Enz, 1999). Evidence has demonstrated that self-efficacy (one's capability to do well

on a particular task) influences the degree of skill acquisition and retention in learning

situations (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Numerous studies have focused on the antecedents

and consequences of various training methods and self-efficacy in the areas of self-

management (Frayne & Latham, 1987), cognitive modeling (Gist 1989; Mitchell,

Hopper, Daniels, George-Falvy & James, 1994), and behavior modeling (Gist et al.,

1989; Mayer & Russell, 1987). Employees who think they can perform well on a task do

better than those who think they will fail (Gist & Mitchell, 1992).

Gist and Mitchell (1992) proposed a theoretical analysis of the determinants of

self-efficacy utilizing four categories: enactive mastery (personal attainments), vicarious

experience (modeling), verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal, including how it is

assessed and the factors influencing that assessment. Their model identified three types

of assessment processes involved in the formation of self-efficacy: (1) an analysis of task

requirements, (2) an attributional analysis of experience and (3) an assessment of personal and situational resources/constraints (1992). Forming an efficacy judgment may initially require extensive analysis of a task at hand and a person's own situational resources and constraints (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). However, as employees gain experience and knowledge of a task (through training), they are likely to gain confidence in their ability.

Gist (1989) examined the influence of training on self-efficacy in a field study of 59 managers working for a major scientific research and development agency. She analyzed two different training techniques: cognitive modeling with practice and reinforcement versus lecture and practice alone. Cognitive modeling is based on "a process of attending (or "listening") to one's thoughts as one performs an activity and utilizing self-instructional thoughts (or "statements") to guide performance" (Gist, 1989, p. 788). Cognitive modeling was contrasted with behavioral modeling, which entails visually observing a live or videotaped model demonstrating behaviors required for performance. Trainees then imitate the model's behavior in practice or work situations (Gist, Schwoerer & Rosen, 1989). The training involving cognitive modeling was superior to that involving lecture for enhancing self-efficacy; thus training method demonstrated a significant main effect on self-efficacy (1989).

Meaningfulness

The second dimension of psychological empowerment (in a service context) is meaningfulness. In order for training programs to enhance employees' feelings of meaningfulness of work, they should include information regarding the impact the job has on the lives of other people, including those within the organization or in society

(Hackman & Oldham, 1980). When employees understand that their work will have a considerable impact on other people, the meaningfulness of the work is usually enhanced (1980). "When we know that what we do at work will affect someone else's happiness, health, or safety, we care about that work more than if the work is largely irrelevant to the lives and well-being of other people" (p. 79). Kotler et al. (1999) state, "The hospitality industry is unique in that employees are part of the product" (p. 319). Accordingly, it is of extreme importance to realize that employees' interactions cannot be hidden from the customer (Schneider & Bowen, 1993). There is a direct relationship between how employees feel about the human resource management (HRM) practices within their organization and how customers feel about the service they receive (1993). "HRM practices are related to customer perceptions of overall service quality, employee morale, and how well the service facility is administered" (p. 7).

Training programs that emphasize employee empowerment for task completion may also be extremely effective. When employees are encouraged to use a variety of skills and talents to resolve issues, they are more apt to find their tasks meaningful. Accordingly, it seems logical that the higher the level of training employees receive, the more challenging and motivating their work is likely to be. Additionally, an increase in the experienced meaningfulness of work can possibly result in employees' increased feelings of influence within the organization.

<u>Influence</u>

Pfeffer and Veiga (1999) stated, "Training can be a source of competitive advantage in numerous industries for firms with the wisdom to use it" (p. 40). When employees are adequately trained, they are more confident and capable of providing

customers with what they need during service delivery and recovery (Bowen & Lawler, 1992). They have the necessary skills, motivation and initiative to identify and resolve problems, initiate changes in work methods, and take responsibility for quality (Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999). When front-line entry-level staff is adequately trained along with more senior, management level employees, responsibility among employees can be shared (Bowen & Lawler, 1992). The end result is a self-confident staff that makes decisions quickly (knowing management supports their efforts and decisions). Adequately trained employees are more apt to interact with customers with warmth and enthusiasm, resulting in highly satisfied customers who spread the word about their service and become repeat customers (Bowen & Lawler, 1992; Lashley, 1999). Consequently, employees are likely to feel better about their jobs and themselves, sensing the power and significance of their role in the service.

Job design characteristics are also closely related to the dimensions of psychological empowerment and have been identified as playing a key role in determining perceptions of empowerment (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). There is considerable evidence that variations in job characteristics exert an influence on employees' feelings and motivation at work (Gagne et al., 1997). In their job characteristics theory, Hackman and Oldham (1980) suggested five job dimensions are important to consider. Several of these characteristics are related to the influence dimension of psychological empowerment. Thus, I use job characteristics theory to further explain how the influence dimension of psychological empowerment is related to training.

<u>Job Design</u>

Hackman and Oldham's (1980) job characteristics theory provides a framework that explains how job characteristics influence employees' motivation. According to Hackman and Oldham (1980), job design is based on five core job characteristics: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and job feedback. Each of the five characteristics contributes to three critical psychological states: experienced meaningfulness of the work, experienced responsibility for outcomes of the work, and knowledge of the actual results of work activities. Of interest in the current discussion of perceived influence is autonomy.

Autonomy is the degree to which a job offers freedom, independence, and discretion in determining procedures to carry out a task (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Heizer & Render, 2000). Jobs that are considered to be highly autonomous allow the employee to determine the order and scheduling of job tasks, specific procedures for accomplishment of the tasks, coordination with other employees and/or departments and other conditions of work (Spector, 1986). Influence is related to autonomy and helps employees determine whether they have an impact on or are able to influence the organization (Corsun & Enz, 1999). Employees who feel substantial autonomy in their jobs are likely to feel more personally responsibility for work related success and failure, and are willing to accept personal accountability for the outcomes (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Training programs that encourage employee independence and creativity and support the concept of employee empowerment are apt to increase how influential employees perceive themselves to be within the organization. The levels of training

through which Air Force Services Squadron members progress are designed such that one of the benefits of higher level training is employee independence and creativity.

To summarize, providing training (familiarizing employees with a task) is likely to raise employees' perceived levels of self-efficacy and influence, thereby raising their overall feelings of psychological empowerment. This leads to the following hypothesis.

H1: The more advanced one's level of training, the greater his/her perceptions of psychological empowerment.

Organizational Commitment

Developing a clear understanding of organizational commitment has been difficult due to much ambiguity in the definition and measurement of the construct itself (Caldwell, Chatman, & O'Reilly, 1990). Morrow (1983) noted over 25 commitment-related concepts or measures (as cited in Caldwell et al., 1986). According to O'Reilly and Chatman (1986), "commitment to an organization is predicated on three separate bases of attachment: compliance, identification and internalization" (p. 493).

'Compliance' refers to an attachment based on expectations of specific, extrinsic rewards or punishment. 'Identification' refers to an attachment based on a longing for affiliation within the organization. 'Internalization' refers to value alignment between an individual and the organization and is related to internalized normative pressures (values). Subsequently, in work with Caldwell, (Caldwell et al., 1990), Chatman and O'Reilly settled on a two-dimensional model of commitment: normative and instrumental. Normative commitment represents the 'internalization' and 'identification' measures of previous work, both based on shared values to the organization.

Instrumental commitment represents the 'compliance' measure of earlier work. Of interest in this study is the normative commitment of employees because it has been shown to predict employees' attitudes and behaviors.

Wiener (1982) identified three categories of variables as antecedents of commitment: person-organization fit, job characteristics and work experiences, and personal-demographic variables. Person-organization fit refers to a "right type of person would be most likely to identify strongly with a particular organization" and includes personality variables and value orientations (1982, p. 419). Job characteristics and work experiences resemble the job design characteristics of Hackman and Oldham (1980) and include job challenge, task identity, and feedback in addition to the opportunity for social interaction, group attitudes, and organizational dependability (Wiener, 1982). Personal-demographic variables and their relationships with commitment "reflect processes of growth and personal change involved in the development of identification" (p. 419). Age and tenure have been found to be particularly significant (Wiener, 1982).

"Research concerning outcomes of commitment indicates that the behavioral outcomes showing the strongest relationships with commitment have been turnover and intention to stay in the organization" (Wiener, 1982, p. 419). Consequently, it seems worth the effort to predict ways of building organizational commitment within employees. Employee training may be one avenue that can help increase organizational commitment.

Training and Organizational Commitment

Tannenbaum et al. (1991) examined how training influenced the development of trainees' attitudes and beliefs. The study investigated 666 military trainees' expectations

and desires before training and their subsequent perceptions of what occurred during training. "Training that enhances self-efficacy and motivation should improve subsequent performance and reduce the time it takes for employees to perform well" (Tannenbaum et al., 1991, p. 767). Pre-training expectations and desires were found to influence the development of posttraining commitment, self-efficacy and motivation. Training fulfillment, trainee reactions, and trainee performance were positively related to posttraining organizational commitment, physical self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy and training motivation. When training fails to meet trainees' expectations and desires, or training fulfillment is low, it can result in a negative attitude change, poor training reactions, and/or failure to complete training (Tannenbaum et al, 1991). "Apparently, entering training with the motivation to do well may enhance the likelihood of developing other positive attitudes during training" (p. 765). Therefore, companies should ensure employees' expectations of training are fulfilled, resulting in feelings of greater commitment, self-efficacy and motivation toward training (Tannenbaum et al., 1991).

"Studies of firms in the United States consistently provide evidence of inadequate levels of training and training focused on the wrong things" (Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999). If a company wants to be successful, it must make a proper investment in employee training efforts (1999). Intuitively, employees who experience inappropriate levels of training and/or mis-focused training would be less likely to be as committed to an organization whereas the opposite circumstances may build commitment. Simply put, people work smarter when they are encouraged to build skills and competence and harder because of the increased involvement (Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999). In such cases, commitment is likely

to develop as a result of employees having more control and say in their work (1999). As previously discussed, Wiener (1982) further supports this notion. He identified job characteristics as one category of variables antecedent to commitment. His work implies that employees who have jobs with satisfying job characteristics are more likely to be pleased with their jobs and are more committed. The higher the level of training employees receive, should inevitably result in more meaningful work—resulting in higher in job characteristics. Therefore, the higher the level of training provided to employees should improve the overall job characteristics and result in higher levels of commitment.

Iverson and Deery (1997) conducted a study of 246 employees from 6 five-star hotels. Their findings indicated that organizational commitment is increased when employees like their jobs and there is an opportunity to develop skills and knowledge. "Employees may view an effective training experience as an indication that the company is willing to invest in them and cares about them; thus, training may enhance their commitment to the organization" (Tannenbaum et al., 1991, p. 760).

The following hypothesis flows from the previous discussion regarding employee training and commitment.

H2:	The more advanced one's level of training, the greater his/her commitment to the organization.

Training and Performance

Well-managed service companies often analyze the successes and/or failures of their training programs by looking at both financial and service performance (Kotler et al., 1999). Employee training is intended to improve performance and enhance the

effectiveness of the part of the organization where individuals or groups work (Bramley, 1996). Most training and development activities focus on the individual, with the intention that the learning will enable him or her to become more effective, either in the present job or one which is shortly to be attempted (1996). Many companies invest heavily in employee training in order to develop streamlined and efficient service-delivery systems (Kotler et al., 1999).

Walt Disney Enterprises introduces new employees to the Disney philosophy and operations by having them attend the Disney University for an all-day orientation session. During the days following orientation, new "cast members" (employees) receive more specific training about their assigned jobs. Cast members are thoroughly scripted on what they are allowed to say to guests, including a list of preapproved ad-libs. Cast members receive further training on exactly how to answer questions guests frequently ask about the park. As a result of the extensive amount of time and resources dedicated to training, Disney employees become excellent "performers" and are extremely proficient at satisfying their guests (Bowen & Lawler, 1992).

The Ritz-Carlton also takes employee training very seriously. The company believes that a more educated and informed employee is in a better position to make decisions in the best interest of the organization (Heizer & Render, 2000). New employees attend a two-day orientation focusing on the "20 Ritz-Carlton Basics" which are expected to be known, owned and energized by all employees. They are also given "intensive training in the art of coddling customers" and are taught to do everything they can to make a guest happy (Kotler et al., 1999, p. 50). Employees are empowered to handle problems on the spot, without consulting upper management (1999). Any staff

member who receives a customer complaint "owns" that complaint until it is resolved (Kotler et al, 1999). Front-desk clerks can spend up to $2000 to remedy any guest grievance and ensure the guest leaves satisfied (Heizer & Render, 2000; Kotler et al., 1999). It costs less for the Ritz-Carlton to "do things right" the first time because research has shown that reliability, or "doing things right the first time," is the most important aspect of service quality (Bowen & Lawler, 1992, p. 34). As a result, more than 90% of Ritz-Carlton's customers return (Kotler et al., 1999).

The following hypothesis is derived from the discussion above regarding the impact of training on employee performance.

H3:   The more advanced one's level of training, the greater his/her job performance within the organization.

Psychological Empowerment and Performance

Self-efficacy and Performance

Self-efficacy (one of the dimensions of psychological empowerment) has been shown to predict performance (Corsun, 2000; Frayne & Latham, 1987; Gist, 1989; Gist et al., 1989; Mathieu et al., 1993; Tannenbaum et al., 1991). Mathieu et al. (1993) collected survey data from 215 students enrolled in 15 eight-week long university bowling classes and examined the antecedents of self-efficacy development during training, and the subsequent influence of self-efficacy on trainees' reactions and performance improvement. The researchers found that initial performance was positively related to the development of self-efficacy (Mathieu et al., 1993). Trainees' initial self-efficacy levels also had a strong positive relationship with mid-course self-efficacy. In general,

efficacy levels were somewhat consistent over time, as in previous research (Gist et al., 1991; Tannenbaum et al., 1991). Additionally, achievement motivation had a positive relationship with the development of self-efficacy (Mathieu et al., 1993). Students entering the course with expectations of challenging situations and hard work were more likely to exhibit increased self-efficacy during training. However, achievement motivation influenced training effectiveness only when mediated by self-efficacy. Last, trainees who chose or wanted to be in the course were more likely to develop increased self-efficacy during training. "Perhaps trainees who wanted to take the course entered more motivated to learn, exerted more effort, and thus, correctly believed that they would learn to bowl better than before" (Mathieu et al., 1991, p. 140).

Mitchell et al. (1994) also examined the relationship among self-efficacy perceptions, their change over time and how the changes relate to task performance. Over time, employees reported having to think less while working on each step of a task, thereby reducing their overall amount of attention and cognitive efforts spent on a task (1994). People move from more effortful to less effortful cognitive processes when performing a task and estimating their self-efficacy (1994). In addition, past performance made the greatest contribution to self-efficacy in comparison with other factors including: level of alertness, desire to do well, physical comfort, level of effort, current mood, task difficulty, task complexity, task novelty, work disturbances, available resources, past experience with similar tasks and task feedback. Past performance is a key indicator for estimating self-efficacy and future performance (1994).

Gist, Schwoerer and Rosen (1989) conducted a field experiment with 108 managers and administrators at a large state university. This research examined the

relative effectiveness of behavior modeling and tutorial approaches for enhancing training performance. The tutorial approach included the use of computer-aided instruction (CAI), which presents information using detailed instructions, illustrative examples and structured drills, providing continuous feedback and reinforcement (1989). A positive relationship was found between initial self-efficacy and performance. Participants who scored high in self-efficacy performed considerably better than participants having low self-efficacy scores. Additionally, those with lower self-efficacy scores reported greater confidence in their ability to master the software training in the modeling compared with the tutorial conditions. Overall, modeling training resulted in better performance and was also associated with "more positive reported work styles, less negative affect during training, and greater satisfaction with training" (p. 890).

The empirical studies discussed above yield consistent findings. Self-efficacy is positively associated with performance and/or can mediate the changes in performance, and past performance is a key indicator for estimating self-efficacy and future performance (Mathieu et al., 1993; Mitchell et al., 1994). These findings demonstrate the importance of self-efficacy and may assist employers to better understand how self-efficacy affects employee performance.

Influence, Meaningfulness, and Performance

Spreitzer (1996) collected survey data from a sample of 393 middle managers, representing diverse units of a Fortune 50 organization and examined the characteristics of an empowering system. An initial theoretical framework for viewing high-involvement systems suggests "high-involvement systems enable employees to better use information and to understand how they can influence organizational activities" (p. 485).

In addition, they are said to effectively promote employee trust and increase their sense of control, as well as their commitment, within the organization (1996). A wide span of control (by one's supervisor), sociopolitical support, access to information, and unit climate were positively related to psychological empowerment. It seems likely that such a system, in addition to structurally empowering, will result in psychological empowerment.

Fulford and Enz (1995) collected data from 297 service employees in thirty private clubs and examined the degree to which self-efficacy, influence, and meaning explained employee perceptions of satisfaction, loyalty, overall work performance, level of services provided to members, and concern for others. They found that employee perceived empowerment had an effect on satisfaction, loyalty, performance, service delivery, and concern for others (1995). Of greatest interest here is the performance aspect. The findings suggest that perceiving oneself as empowered (or influential) is positively linked to employee performance within the organizations. "Perceiving yourself to have influence is also a critical factor in shaping job satisfaction. Liking the work and being able to influence what happens at work are critical" (Fulford & Enz, 1995, p. 172). Based on prior theory, if employees believe they can influence the organization, they are more apt to actually do so through their work, and will be seen as more effective, and thus as higher performers (Spreitzer, Kizilos, & Nason, 1997).

Spreitzer et al. (1997) surveyed 393 middle managers from a Fortune 500 industrial organization. They found that the meaning dimension of psychological empowerment was positively related to work satisfaction. Randolph (1995) further supports this notion, believing that information sharing is crucial. Randolph (1995)

states, "Without information, people cannot possibly act responsibly; informed, they are almost compelled to act with responsibility" (p. 22). When companies share information, employees are often better able to understand the "big picture" and contribute to problem-solving efforts. Employees who have information about performance levels "set challenging goals—and when they achieve those goals, they will reset the goals at a higher level" (Randolph, 1995, p. 23). It seems to make intuitive sense that both information sharing and goal setting are important not only to work satisfaction, but also to the meaningfulness aspect of psychological empowerment. When employers share sensitive information with employees, enabling them to better understand and contribute to the overall organizational success, employees experience higher levels of meaningfulness within their work and are likely to perceive themselves as empowered.

The influence and meaningfulness dimensions of psychological empowerment discussed above imply that employees' performance levels would be higher if they perceive themselves to be empowered, leading to the following hypothesis.

H4:   Employee perceptions of psychological empowerment will have significant positive effects on his/her work performance.

<div align="center">Psychological Empowerment and Commitment</div>

Available evidence indicates that empowerment facilitates commitment, creativity, productivity, satisfaction, and intrinsic motivation (Fulford & Enz, 1995; Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Liden et al., 2000). In a study of 157 employees from two different departments of a Canadian telephone company, Gagne et al. (1997) found "job characteristics are importantly involved in workers' feelings of empowerment" (p. 1234). Meaningfulness was positively associated with task significance and receiving feedback

from others. Impact (influence) was also positively associated with receiving feedback from others and having a job that provides inherent feedback. As previously mentioned, Fulford and Enz (1995) found that perceived empowerment had an effect on satisfaction, loyalty, performance, service delivery, and concern for others. Loyalty is associated with organizational commitment (Wiener, 1982). Hence, a loyal employee is most likely to also be committed.

Liden, Wayne and Sparrowe (2000) tested the mediating role of empowerment in relations between job characteristics, leader-member exchange (LMX), team-member exchange (TMX) and work outcomes. The empowerment dimensions of meaning and competence mediated the relationship between job characteristics and work satisfaction. In addition, meaning also mediated job characteristics and organizational commitment.

Spector (1986) completed an extensive literature review that examined 101 samples taken from 88 studies. The purpose of the analysis was to examine the relationship between perceived control (influence) and employee outcome variables. He found that "employees who perceive comparatively high levels of control at work are more satisfied, committed, involved, and motivated" (Spector, 1986, p. 1013). Additionally the employees were better performers, held greater expectancies, experienced fewer physical and emotional symptoms, had less role ambiguity and conflict, were absent less, had fewer intentions of quitting, and were less likely to quit (1986).

Brief and Nord (1990) suggest that individuals who find their jobs meaningful are more committed to their careers. The meaning of work is often tied to a person's beliefs, attitudes, and values (1990). Therefore, when employees' feelings of experienced

empowerment are accompanied by personal value alignment with the organization as a whole, they are more likely to have high normative commitment to their organization (Brief & Nord, 1990; Caldwell et al, 1990; Wiener, 1982).

The discussion above implies that employees' performance levels are higher when they perceive themselves to be empowered, leading to the following hypothesis.

H5:   Employee perceptions of psychological empowerment will have significant positive effects on their commitment.

Several demographic characteristic variables are also included in this study for control purposes. It is anticipated that none of the demographic characteristics will exert any effects on the non-demographic variables.

H6:   The demographic characteristic variables will not have an affect on employee perceptions of psychological empowerment, commitment, and/or performance.

To summarize, the hypotheses argue that level of training is associated with employees' perceived feelings of empowerment, commitment, and performance. Additionally, perceptions of psychological empowerment are argued to influence employees' work performance within, and commitment to, an organization. Last, the demographic characteristics of the sample should not have any effect on the outcome variables of psychological empowerment, commitment, and/or performance. The methods used for testing the hypotheses discussed in this chapter are described in Chapter III.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection Procedures

Data were gathered through the on-site administration of pen and paper surveys at two different military bases located in the Southwestern United States. Survey respondents were military members working in a Services Squadron. Members who voluntarily participated completed a Participant Informed Consent letter (Appendix A), and a Work Perception Survey (Appendix B) regarding their perceptions of their jobs and of the United States Air Force. Participants also annotated various military training courses they had completed on the survey. The manager/supervisor who worked most closely with the participant also completed a Supervisor Evaluation (Appendix C). Both organizations participated in exchange for feedback regarding military members' perceptions.

I administered the majority of surveys at the first base (Base A) during two separate meetings intended to capture the entire military population (n=66) in the Services Squadron. The commander had previously planned a squadron commander's call that all military members were required to attend. The commander allowed me to administer the surveys at this meeting.

I set up a table at the entrance of the facility where the meeting was conducted. As military members entered the facility to attend the meeting, they were

asked to annotate their rank, last name, direct supervisor's last name and duty phone number on a numbered sign-in log. I gave each member an informed consent cover letter and the corresponding numbered perception survey next to his or her name on the sign-in log. At the beginning of the meeting, the commander introduced me and I requested the military members take a few minutes to read and sign the cover letter, fill out the survey and return them to me after the meeting was over. I also requested all employees who supervised military personnel to remain for a few minutes after the meeting was over. At that time, the supervisors were asked to fill out an additional survey concerning each individual they directly supervised. I also visited specific work areas of those individuals who were unable to attend either meeting. Participants spanned across all hierarchical levels and job types within the squadron.

To administer the surveys at the second base (Base B), I visited each work-center and personally distributed informed consent cover letters and perception surveys to each participant and requested him or her to take 3-5 minutes to fill them out. I maintained a log to record the survey number, rank and last name of each participant, the direct supervisor's last name and a duty phone number. Upon completion of the work perception survey, participants identified as supervisors were asked to fill out a supervisor survey for each respondent they directly supervised. Participants spanned across all hierarchical levels and job types within the squadron. The military population of the Services Squadron at Base B was n=112.

Of the 169 total participants, 35 percent (n=59) work at Base A and the remaining 65 percent (n=110) work at Base B. In order for a participant's data to be complete, both the individual perception survey and the supervisor's survey were required. Both the

perception survey and the supervisor survey were returned for 95 percent of the

participants resulting in a final sample size of 160. Response rates were 92 percent at

Base A and 96 percent at Base B.

Research Instruments

Work Perception Survey (Appendix B)

The Work Perception Surveys were numbered in the upper right hand corner and

divided into four sections. The first section contained eight statements designed to

measure workers' level of normative commitment to the organization. Commitment was

measured using a modified version of the Commitment Questionnaire developed by

O'Reilly and Chatman (1986). The questionnaire was modified to include only the eight

items originally labeled by O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) as representing internalization

and identification (see Appendix B, items 1-8). These items represent commitment to

the organization based on shared values—normative commitment (Caldwell, Chatman &

O'Reilly, 1990). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of

agreement/disagreement by circling a response for each statement from a seven-point

Likert-type scale ranging from 1, "strongly disagree" to 7, "strongly agree." Previous use

of this subscale resulted in a reliability coefficient of .91 (Corsun, 1999).

The second section contained 12 statements that measure employees' perceived

psychological empowerment (see Appendix B, items 9-20). Psychological empowerment

was measured using the 12-item scale originally developed by Spreitzer (1995), and

modified for service environments by Fulford and Enz (1995). Fulford and Enz (1995)

found that in an application of the scale to service organizations, three distinct

dimensions of empowerment emerged: meaningfulness, personal influence, and self-efficacy. The service dimensions were used in this study due to their appropriateness for the service context. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement/disagreement by circling a response for each statement from a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1, "strongly disagree" to 7, "strongly agree." Previous use of this subscale resulted in reliability coefficients of .79, .78, and .68, respectively for meaningfulness, influence, and self-efficacy (Corsun & Enz, 1999).

The third section contained seven questions focusing on the demographic characteristics of the workers. The demographic information substantiated whether there were any specific demographic traits that significantly affected feelings of psychological empowerment, normative commitment and/or performance. The demographic characteristics of the final sample are presented in Table 1.

The fourth section asked respondents to record the various training courses they completed by marking the appropriate boxes (see Appendix B, item 28). The training course selections reflected only current training and educational opportunities. There was room for individuals to indicate other training they had by annotating such courses in the "other" category. The "other" category was available due to the fact that there have been changes to training course offerings and course availability throughout the years. This category helped capture such training from the past.

All training courses are categorized into one of three distinct levels. Level 1 includes training most often provided in the first four years of military service and highly correlates with the young airman ranks of E1-E4. Training level 2 includes mid-level

Table 1: Sample Demographics

Characteristic	Base A	Base B	Full Sample
n=	54	104	158
Gender:			
Male	34	63	97
Female	20	41	61
Rank:			
E1-E4	55.60%	55.80%	55.70%
E5-E6	31.50%	35.60%	34.20%
E7-E9	11.10%	6.70%	8.20%
Officer	1.90%	1.90%	1.90%
Age:			
18-22	38.90%	37.50%	38%
23-28	29.60%	24.00%	25.90%
29-35	14.80%	20.20%	18.40%
36-45	16.70%	17.30%	17.10%
46 +	0%	1.00%	0.60%
Position:			
Supervisor	40.70%	45.20%	56.30%
Non-supervisor	59.30%	54.80%	43.70%

Characteristic	Base A	Base B	Full Sample
n=	54	104	158
Time in Grade (TIG):			
0-4 yrs	94.40%	84.60%	88%
5-8 yrs	3.70%	10.60%	8.20%
9-15 yrs	0%	2.90%	1.90%
16-20 yrs	1.90%	1.90%	1.90%
21 or more yrs	0%	0%	0%
Time in Service (TIS):			
0-4 yrs	48.10%	51.90%	50.60%
5-8 yrs	22.20%	10.60%	14.60%
9-15 yrs	13.00%	17.30%	15.80%
16-20 yrs	14.80%	18.30%	17.10%
21 or more yrs	1.90%	1.90%	1.90%
Education:			
High School/GED	33.30%	25%	27.80%
Some college	53.70%	65.40%	61.40%
Associate's degree	7.40%	2.90%	4.40%
Bachelor's degree	3.70%	3.80%	3.80%
Some graduate	0.00%	2.90%	1.90%
Graduate degree	1.90%	0%	0.60%

* Two outlier cases were removed from total sample resulting in a final sample size of 158.

leadership and managerial-type courses designed for the ranks of E5-E6. The highest-level training courses available are level 3 courses. These courses are designed for senior Air Force leaders and managers. Attendees generally include the ranks of E7-E9 and Officers.

<p style="text-align:center;">Supervisor Evaluation (Appendix C)</p>

The Supervisor Evaluation contained 11 statements, divided into two sections. The employee performance scale reported in Tsui, Pearce, Porter, and Tripoli (1997) was used to measure performance (see Appendix C). The first six items measured basic task performance and assessed the quantity, quality, and efficiency of employees' performance in comparison to others in a similar job. The supervisor was requested to indicate his/her level of agreement/disagreement about the individual's job performance by circling a response for each statement from a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1, "strongly disagree" to 7, "strongly agree." The last five statements focused on an employee's overall competence, judgment, freedom from errors, job knowledge, and creativity while accomplishing his or her assigned role (Tsui et al., 1997). The supervisor was asked to rate the employee by circling a response for each statement from a seven - point Likert - type scale ranging from 1, "unsatisfactory" to 7, "excellent." Previous use of this scale resulted in a reliability coefficient of .97 (Corsun, 2000).

<p style="text-align:center;">Data Analysis</p>

Diagnostic evaluations (i.e., examinations of bivariate plots for the linearity of predictor-response relationships and outliers) were performed using SPSS for Windows, release 10.0. The bivariate plots revealed two outlier cases (both from Base B). After

removing these cases, bivariate plots were redrawn and reexamined. All predictor-response relationships were relatively linear, permitting the data analysis to continue.

A principal component analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation was performed on all variables of the psychological empowerment (meaningfulness, influence, and self-efficacy) and commitment items. The performance data was excluded from the analysis since it was provided by participants' managers/supervisors. Using a cut-off of .50 for factor loadings, the PCA revealed a clean, four-factor structure corresponding to the measured variables. No single factor accounted for more than 23 percent of the variance, and collectively the four factors explained 66 percent of the variance. One item of Spreitzer's three-item subscale for self-efficacy did not load cleanly on any factor, thus it was removed.

Hypothesis testing was performed using AMOS, release 4.0, a structural equation modeling software package. AMOS simultaneously tests all hypotheses and provides results of the overall fit of the model.

The results of the data analysis and hypothesis testing are presented and described in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics and scale reliabilities are presented in Table 2 and a correlation matrix of all measured variables appears in Table 3. Training level is not included in the matrix because it is a categorical, not continuous, variable. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) for the variables of commitment, influence, meaningfulness, and performance are .89, .90, .86 and .97, respectively, and are comfortably above the conventional cut-off of .70. However, the resultant alpha for self-efficacy (after removing one item) was .63.

The correlation matrix results reveal a highly significant relationship between meaningfulness and influence ($r = .58$, $p < .01$) and also significant associations between influence and normative commitment ($r = .45$, $p < .01$) and meaningfulness and normative commitment ($r = .45$, $p < .01$). Self-efficacy has a highly significant relationship with both meaningfulness ($r = .44$, $p < .01$) and influence ($r = .40$, $p < .01$). Moderately strong associations exist between performance and self-efficacy ($r = .33$, $p < .01$), performance and meaningfulness ($r = .32$, $p < .01$) and performance and influence ($r = .31$, $p < .01$). Performance is associated with both normative commitment ($r = .19$, $p < .05$) and self-efficacy ($r = .17$, $p < .05$). The last two correlations, though significant, are not large.

Table 2: <u>Descriptive Statistics and Scale Reliabilities for all Variables</u>

	Mean	Std. Dev	Alpha
<u>Outcome Variables</u>			
Commitment	39.88	9.48	0.89
Influence	30.70	8.52	0.90
Meaningfulness	17.03	3.93	0.86
Self-efficacy	12.48	1.68	0.63
Performance	62.27	11.88	0.97

* significant at p < .05
** significant at p < .01

Table 3: <u>Correlations for all Variables</u>

Variable	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Commitment (1)					
Influence (2)	.45**				
Meaningfulness (3)	0.45**	0.58**			
Self-efficacy (4)	0.17*	0.40**	0.44**		
Performance (5)	0.19*	0.31**	0.32**	0.33**	

* significant at $p < .05$
** significant at $p < .01$

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to test Hypothesis 6 (H6). It was necessary to test H6 first to determine if there was any impact of the demographic variables on the outcome variables. The MANOVA revealed that gender is the only demographic variable having a significant effect on at least one other variable. A test of between-subjects effects revealed that gender has a significant effect on perceived influence (F_1 = 8.355, p < .01). In order to account for the effect of gender, it was necessary to include gender in the path model in which I test the other five hypotheses. As a result, gender was added to the hypothesized path model in Figure 1, resulting in the path model displayed in Figure 2.

Hypothesis Tests

To test the hypotheses proposed in Chapter III, and graphically represented in Figure 2, a path model was generated. A path analysis shows "variables interconnected with lines that are used to indicate causal flow" ("Structural Equation Modeling," 2000). It hypothesizes causal relationships among variables and tests the causal models with a linear equation system (2000). Structural equations modeling (SEM) "enables one to assess the degree to which the hypothesized model 'fits' the data" (Corsun, 1999).

The results of testing the hypothesized relationships represented in the model are presented in Table 4. As can be seen from an examination of the path coefficients and their corresponding significance levels, four of the hypotheses received at least partial support. Employees who attained a higher level of training perceived themselves as more influential (standardized regression weight (SRW) = 0.21, p < .01) and were rated by supervisors as better performers (SRW = 0.28, p < .001). Self-efficacy and meaning
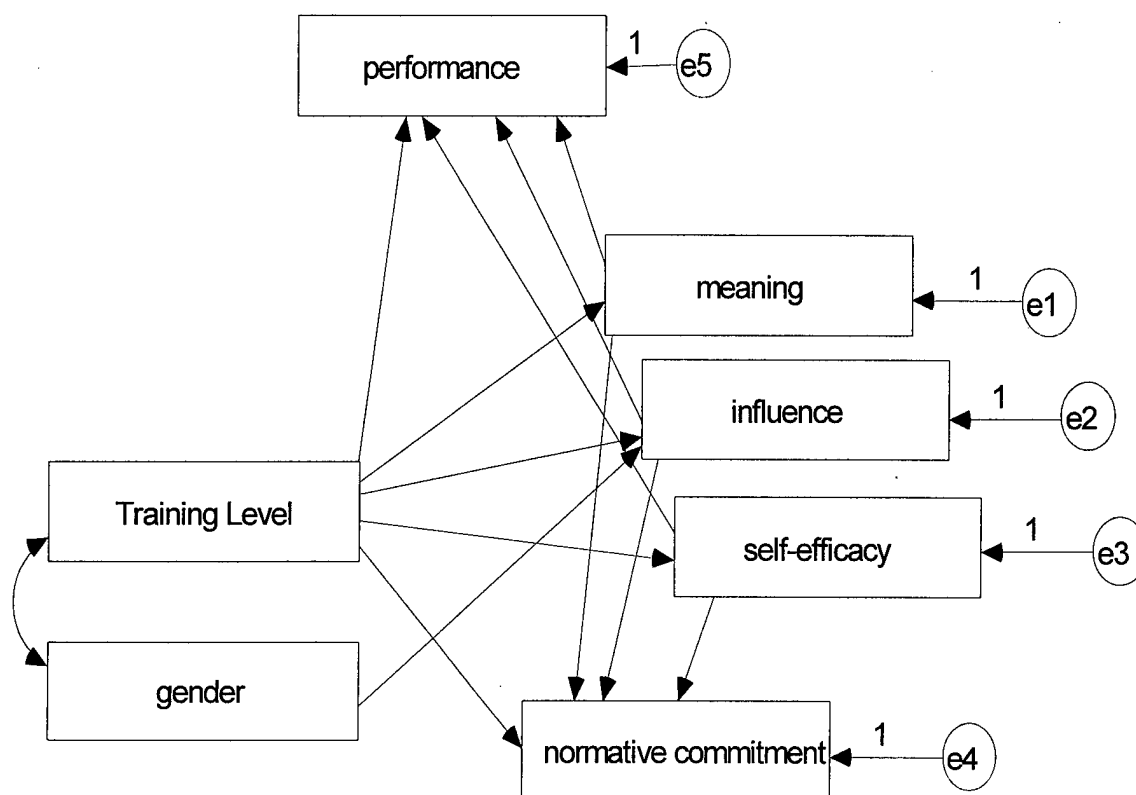
Figure 2: Modified Path Model

Table 4: Hypothesis Test/Path Analysis Results

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient[1]
H1	Advanced training level→psychological empowerment (+)	
	Advanced training level→influence (+)	0.21**
	Advanced training level→meaningfulness (+)	0.15
	Advanced training level→self-efficacy (+)	0.15
H2	Advanced training level→commitment (+)	0.14
H3	Advanced training level→performance (+)	0.28***
H4	Psychological empowerment→performance (+)	
	Influence→performance (+)	0.08
	Meaningfulness→performance (+)	0.15*
	Self-efficacy→performance (+)	0.20**
H5	Psychological empowerment→commitment (+)	
	Influence→commitment (+)	0.28***
	Meaningfulness→commitment (+)	0.32***
	Self-efficacy→commitment (+)	-0.1
H6	Gender→influence (-)	-0.22**

[1] All coefficients are standardized for ease of interpretation.
*p < .05
** p < .01
*** p< .001

were also associated with performance (SRW = 0.20, $p < .01$, SRW = 0.15, $p < .01$,

respectively.) Meaning and influence were strongly associated with commitment

(SRW = .32, $p < .001$, SRW = 0.28, $p < .001$, respectively). However, no relationship

existed between training level and commitment. Thus, Hypotheses 1, 4, and 5 received

partial support, Hypothesis 3 received strong support and Hypothesis 2 was not

supported. Gender, as previously discussed, was hypothesized not to be influential,

however, was added to the path model as a result of the test of between subjects effects.

Gender was significantly and negatively related to influence (SRW = -0.22, $p < .01$).

Model Fit

The path model presented in Figure 2 does not present the best explanation of the

data, as evidenced by the partial support for the hypotheses. To further evaluate model

fit, an investigation of the statistical indices in structural equations modeling can be

utilized. The model testing applied here includes the χ^2 goodness-of-fit-index (GFI), the

incremental fit index (IFI) and the comparative fit index (CFI). The χ^2 test indicates

"whether or not the observed frequencies are a good fit to the expected frequencies"

(Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 1998, p. 579). The χ^2 test has a p-value for analysis. Bentler

and Bonett's (1980) standard cutoff of .90 is used for the GFI, IFI, and CFI to assess

model fit (as cited in Corsun, 1999). "The GFI, IFI, and CFI all result in scores ranging

between 0 and 1, with 1 indicating a good fit to the data" (Corsun, 1999, p. 78).

As mentioned in the results of the hypothesis testing, the non-significant paths

indicate the path model presented in Figure 2 does not provide a very good fit to the data.

The χ^2 test confirms poor model fit (χ^2 (8, n = 158) = 104.03, $p < .001$). A very low χ^2

indicates good fit, whereas a very large χ^2 indicates poor overall fit. The other fit indices (GFI = .84, IFI = .56, CFI = .54) are substantially below the required .90 minimum cutoff, further supporting poor model fit.

Post Hoc Model Generation

An iterative process was used to modify the path model to better explain and provide a better "fit" of the data. By deleting non-significant paths and adding the paths specified by the modification indices, the value of the χ^2 statistic was significantly reduced (χ^2 (7, n = 158) = 6.75, p = .46, GFI = .99, IFI = 1.00, CFI = 1.00). The revised path model (Figure 3) has a substantially better fit than the original, hypothesized model. All the paths in the model are significant (see Table 5 for path SRWs and p-values).

The new model indicates that self-efficacy should be treated as a predictor variable, and is positively associated with performance (SRW = .22, p < .01), meaning (SRW = .24, p < .001), and influence (SRW = .34, p < .001). Training level is the strongest predictor of performance (SRW = .31, p < .001) and is also associated with influence (SRW = .17, p < .05). Gender is negatively associated with influence (SRW = -.18, p < .05), but positively associated with performance (SRW = .16, p < .05). This finding is interesting, revealing that women tend to perceive themselves as less influential and are seen by their supervisors as better performers than are men. Influence is associated with meaning (SRW = .49, p < .001) and commitment (SRW = .28, p < .001). Finally, meaningfulness is associated with both commitment (SRW = .28, p < .001) and performance (SRW = .21, p < .01).
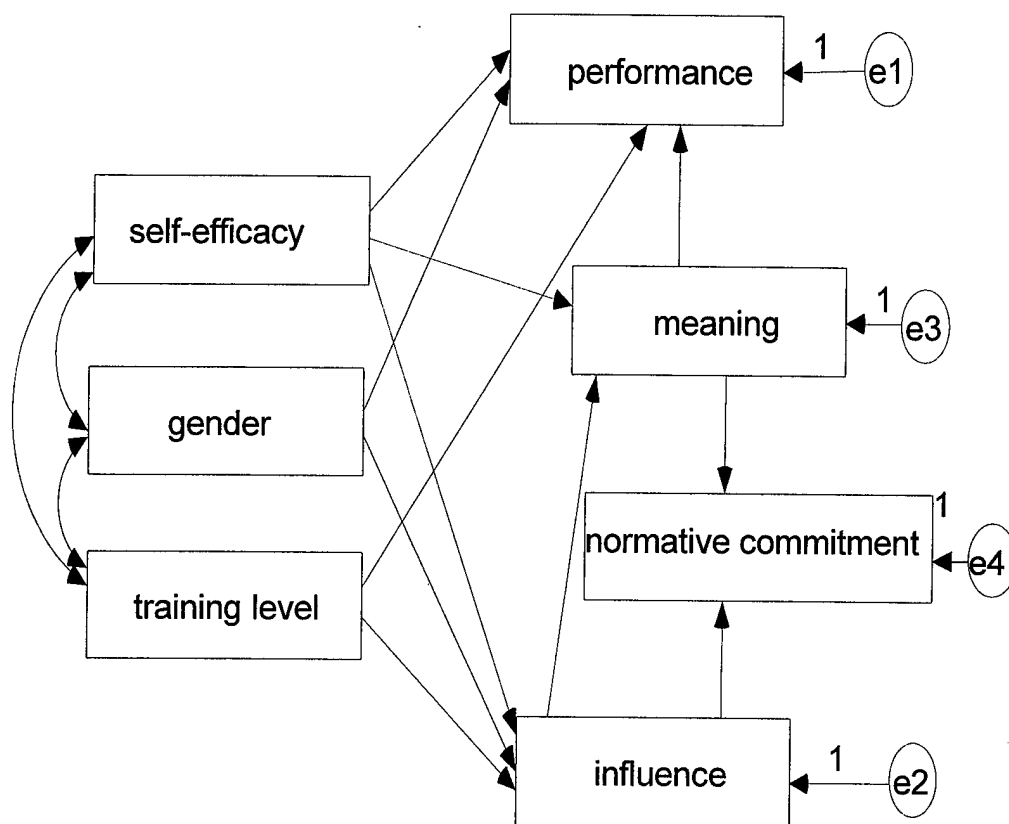
Figure 3: Respecified Path Model

Table 5: <u>Respecified Path Model Coefficients</u>

Path	Coefficient[1]
Advanced training level→psychological empowerment (+)	
Advanced training level→influence (+)	0.17*
Advanced training level→performance (+)	0.31***
Psychological empowerment→performance (+)	
Meaningfulness→performance (+)	0.21**
Self-efficacy→performance (+)	0.22**
Psychological empowerment→commitment (+)	
Influence→commitment (+)	0.28***
Meaningfulness→commitment (+)	0.28***
Self efficacy→influence	0.34***
Self efficacy→meaningfulness	0.24***
Gender→influence	0.18*
Gender→performance	0.16*
Influence→meaningfulness	0.49***

[1] All coefficients are standardized for ease of interpretation.
*$p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

The results of the hypothesis tests and the exploration and respecification of a path model

that better explains the data are discussed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion of Results

This study provides managers information about the effectiveness of level of training on employee perceptions of psychological empowerment, commitment, and performance within an organization. It further contributes to extant research by validating our understanding of the distinct, yet related, dimensions of psychological empowerment in the service context and its effects on employee performance and commitment in the workplace.

The hypothesized path model (Figure 2) revealed that training level was the strongest predictor of performance and also moderately related to influence. The best-fit model (Figure 3) further supports both the training—performance link and the training— influence relationship. These results reinforce the important role training can play in predicting employee performance within an organization. Providing adequate and proper level training can directly affect employees' ability to provide adequate service to a customer. Thus, enabling employees to take care of customers' needs by providing training will likely improve the likelihood of customer satisfaction, thereby increasing the chances of organizational success.

Originally, the theoretical model did not include or hypothesize any relationships between gender and any of the outcome variables. However, because the test of between-subjects effects revealed that gender had a significant negative effect on perceived influence, it was included in the hypothesized path model (Figure 2). The best-fit model (Figure 3) revealed that there was also a relationship between gender and performance. This is of particular interest. Women perceive themselves to be less influential in their jobs; however, they are seen as better performers by their supervisors. One possible explanation may be the composition of this predominantly male workforce; 82% of the total Air Force are men and only 18% are women. Women may feel less influential because they are so outnumbered by the men. Additionally, because they are so few in number, they may feel their tasks or actions at work are more closely scrutinized, causing them to overcompensate or work harder at tasks than their male counterparts. This extra effort may explain why the women are generally seen as better performers.

The hypothesized path model (Figure 2) and the best-fit path model (Figure 3) support both self-efficacy and meaning relationships with performance. These relationships are somewhat intuitive. If employees perceive themselves to be competent and find meaning in their work, their performance is likely to be reflective of such thinking. Both Figures 2 and 3 also support meaning—commitment and influence—commitment links. Therefore, employees who believe their work is meaningful and perceive themselves to be influential are more apt to be committed to the organization.

Neither model found a statistically significant relationship between training level and self-efficacy. This seems somewhat confusing. Intuitively, employees should feel more efficacious with higher-level training. Possibly, employees do not think that the

training they receive is useful or improves their ability to do their job. Another possible explanation may be that with higher-level training comes increased responsibility and increased workload (more is expected in terms of outcomes). There may be cases in which these possible negative outcomes outweigh the positives for employees, especially in circumstances where employees do not have the ability to exercise control appropriately. Last, the two-item self-efficacy measure may have been inadequate to capture the true relationship between training level and self-efficacy.

Limitations/Delimitations

A few limitations of this study should be noted. The amount of training each military member had been provided at the time of the survey was uncontrollable. Military members' training opportunities vary depending on their rank, the base they are assigned to, and leadership support.

This study, based on data collected from two different military installations in the Southwestern United States, enables limited inference to other service organizations. The study was also limited to Air Force personnel assigned to a Services Squadron, who were willing to voluntarily participate. However, Air Force installations are comprised of employees from across the nation and around the world, enabling generalizability to other Air Force organizations. Only the effects of training level are analyzed. There may be many other variables that influence employees' perceived empowerment, commitment, and performance within an organization.

This research is also limited by the nature of the data gathered. The completion of training courses was self-reported, and may not be completely and/or accurately

recorded. In addition, the empowerment and commitment items are also self-reported by the employees. Last, a convenient sample may introduce the possibility of bias.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Study

This study revealed that employee training may be an influential tool for predicting employees' perceptions of influence and performance. Additionally, when employees experience their work as meaningful, their performance and commitment may be positively affected, and if employees feel they can have an impact (or are influential) within an organization, they are likely to be committed to the organization.

Though this study builds on and extends prior research, future studies should consider additional service organizations. The results of this study may be different if conducted in a non-military setting without a predominantly male sample. Additionally, future research should examine the relationship of training to other behavioral and organizational outcomes (e.g. creativity, absenteeism, customer satisfaction). Last, while training level does affect performance and influence, the best-fit model revealed additional significant interrelationships within the three dimensions of psychological empowerment. The most significant relationship in the best-fit model revealed a relationship between influence and meaningfulness. In other words, if employees perceive themselves to be influential, their work is more likely to be meaningful. Future research could focus on the importance of these interrelationships of psychological empowerment.

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APPENDIX A

Participant Informed Consent

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration

Dear Military Member,

As competition within the job market and job availability continues to grow, it is important for leaders and/or managers to be aware of employees' perceptions of their jobs and the Air Force. This study may provide leaders/managers with research-based information, better enabling them to understand concerns of military members.

Please complete the attached questionnaire(s). The questionnaire should take only 3-5 minutes to complete. After you have completed it, please return it to my research assistant or myself. All completed surveys and consent forms will be stored separately in a locked file cabinet for three years in my faculty advisor's office in the William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. If you have any questions regarding this research, please feel free to contact me at (702) 435-5484.

Participation in this study is voluntary and may be discontinued at any time, without penalty. If you have any questions specifically regarding the rights of research subjects, please contact UNLV's Office of sponsored Programs at (702) 895-1357.

Thank you for your participation.
Sincerely,

PAMELA D. BACKEBERG
Graduate Student, UNLV

I agree to participate in the research project described above.

_____   _____
Signature   Date

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration

Work Perception Survey
Confidential Questionnaire

This survey is part of a research study being conducted by the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, examining military members' perceptions of their jobs. All information will be kept confidential. Only my research team will see the surveys and your responses -- squadron leadership will not have access to any individual's responses. The only information that squadron leadership will receive will be the averages of all the responses you and your coworkers provide. You will also be able to access the results of the survey if you wish to better understand how you and your coworkers view your jobs.
Your responses are extremely important in the completion of this study. Please answer all questions completely and honestly. Thank you for your participation.

PAMELA D. BACKEBERG
Graduate Student, UNLV
(702) 435-5484

Please circle a response for the 8 questions below about the Air Force using the following scale.

Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Slightly Disagree 3	Neither Agree nor Disagree 4	Slightly Agree 5	Agree 6	Strongly Agree 7

1. What the Air Force stands for is important to me.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. I talk up the Air Force to my friends as a great organization to work for.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. If the values of the Air Force were different, I would not be as attached to the Air Force.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. Since joining the Air Force, my personal values and those of the Air Force have become more similar.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5. The reason I prefer the Air Force to other organizations is because of what it stands for, that is, its values.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6. My attachment to the Air Force is primarily based on the similarity of my values and those represented by the Air Force.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7. I am proud to tell others that I am a part of the Air Force.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8. I feel a sense of "ownership" in the Air Force rather than being just an employee.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

APPENDIX B (cont)

Circle a response for the 12 questions below about your job using the following scale.

Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Slightly Disagree 3	Neither Agree nor Disagree 4	Slightly Agree 5	Agree 6	Strongly Agree 7

9. My job is well within the scope of my abilities.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

10. My job activities are very meaningful to me.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

11. My opinion counts in group decision-making.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

12. I really care about what I do in my job.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

13. I feel I have freedom in determining how I do my job.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

14. My work is very important to me.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

15. I have a chance to use personal initiative in performing my work.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

16. I have significant influence over what happens at work.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

17. I personally decide how to go about doing my work.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

18. I am confident about my ability to do my job.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

19. I have mastered the skills necessary to do my job.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

20. I have a great deal of control over what happens in my job.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Please answer the following questions about yourself.

21. What type of position do you currently hold?
     a. Non-supervisor   b. Supervisor

22. What is your age?
     a. 18-22   c. 29-35   e. 46 and older
     b. 23-28   d. 36-45

23. What is your gender?
     a. Male   b. Female

24. What is your rank?
     a. E1 - E4   c. E7 - E9
     b. E5 - E6   d. Officer

25. What is your Time in Grade (TIG)?
     a. 0 – 4 yrs   c. 9-15 yrs   e. 21 yrs & over
     b. 5 – 8 yrs   d. 16 – 20 yrs

26. What is your Time in Service (TIS)?
     a. 0 – 4 yrs   c. 9-15 yrs   e. 21 yrs & over
     b. 5 – 8 yrs   d. 16 – 20 yrs

27. Please indicate the level of education you have achieved:
     a. High school diploma   c. CCAF degree   e. Some graduate
     b. Some college   d. Bachelor's degree   f. Graduate degree

APPENDIX B (cont)

28. *Please mark the training courses you have completed:*

Technical Training

- ☐ Services Apprentice Course (3-level school)
- 5-level CDCs ☐ Currently enrolled ☐ Completed
- 7-level CDCs ☐ Currently enrolled ☐ Completed
- ☐ Services Craftsman Course (7-level school)
- ☐ Fitness Fundamentals course
- ☐ Foodservice Shift Leaders Course

Agency Courses

Services Supervisor Course (please circle specific area)

- ☐ Food ☐ Fitness ☐ Prime Ribs
- ☐ Lodging ☐ Mortuary ☐ Other

Activity Manager Course (please circle specific area)

- ☐ Food ☐ Fitness ☐ Mortuary
- ☐ Lodging ☐ Prime Ribs ☐ Other
- ☐ Field Exchange Course

Professional Military Education

- ☐ Airman Leadership School
- ☐ NCO Academy
- ☐ SNCO Academy (correspondence)
- ☐ SNCO Academy (in residence)

Industry school/courses

- ☐ Cooper's clinic
- ☐ Fitness Strength and Conditioning
- ☐ Other _____

AFIT Courses

- ☐ Services 101
- ☐ Flight Chief Course
- ☐ Other_____

Thank you for your participation in this survey!

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration
Supervisor Evaluation – Confidential Questionnaire

_____ indicated that you are his/her direct supervisor. Using the scale below, please indicate your agreement with the 6 statements about his/her job performance.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. The quality of her/his work is higher than average.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. Her/his efficiency is much higher than average.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. Her/his standards of work quality are higher than the formal standards for her/his job.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. She/he strives for higher quality work than required.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5. She/he upholds the highest professional standards.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6. The quality of her/his work is much higher than average.   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Use the scale below to rate him/her on the next 5 questions.

Unsatisfactory						Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. Her/his ability to perform core job tasks is: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8. Her/his judgment when performing core job tasks is: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9. Her/his accuracy when performing core job tasks is: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

10. Her/his knowledge with reference to core job tasks is: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

11. Her/his creativity when performing core job tasks is: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Thank you for your participation!

VITA

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